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## School funding formula to be further scrutinized in coming months

House Finance Committee Chairman Steven M. Costantino has announced the Finance Committee is assembling a work group to study the public funding of education in an effort to develop legislation next year to improve the system.

The group will continue the work that was begun in 2005 by the Joint Committee to Establish a Permanent Education Foundation Aid Formula, which has been working to develop a predictable formula that balances students' needs and individual communities' resources.

The joint committee has been working with an advisory group appointed by the House speaker and Senate president and chaired by Elizabeth Burke Bryant, executive director of Rhode Island Kids Count, to develop a formula that recognizes students' needs through a system of weights and recognizes the important relationship between those needs and community resources. The adoption of a formula would provide predictability to school districts as they plan their budgets.

The joint committee presented a proposed formula as legislation submitted in the General Assembly this session, but hoped to continue to work on the proposal with another advisory group that would concen-

trate on Rhode Islanders ability to fund the formula.

Costantino said rather than rush that legislation through the Assembly during the hectic last days of the session, he would prefer that the House Finance Committee work on it during the out-of-session months this year and come back to General Assembly next year with a proposal that has been carefully developed and studied.

The work group will consist of members of the House Finance Committee as well as representatives who served on the joint committee, which was co-chaired by Rep. Edith H.

Ajello (D-Providence) and Cranston Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27).

Rep. Paul W. Crowley (D-Dist. 75, Newport), who is deputy chairman of the House Finance Committee and a former chairman of its Subcommittee on Education, will serve as the work group's chairman. Also serving on the work group will be Cranston Rep. Robert B. Jacquard (D-Dist. 17).

Jacquard, the current chairman of the House Finance Committee's Subcommittee on Education, said he looks forward to addressing a number of issues that have been raised a

number of times in the past, but have not been fully investigated.

"There have been many times in the past when people have suggested that we might be able to save money and still deliver education services just as effectively if we changed the way we administer them. At a time when our state needs to improve the results of education and to use our resources as effectively as we can, we have to sit down and seriously consider every available option," said Jacquard.

Sen. Gallo could not be reached for comment.